

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family
Independence
Agency

Nov-Dec 2001

In this issue

Anthrax warning.....2

From the director....3

**Livingston County
wraparound night...4**

Reqwal Heard.....5

**Behavior based
interviewing trng.....6**

Intercepted letters..7

CSES statewide 10

Meet OFAP trng..... 12

**Birth match system
six-month update.. 14**

My locks of love 14

**Wayne County adult
outreach prgrm..... 15**

Charles Lee..... 16

Linda McLain..... 16

**Employee oversight
nets \$140,000..... 17**

Food stamps RIP... 17

**Chafee Foster Care
Independence Act. 18**

**JAIBG assisting local
juvenile justice.....20**

Peer Review Award.21

State Gov't News.....22

New name for new era

Food Stamps renamed Food Assistance Program

LANSING – The Family Independence Agency renamed Michigan's Food Stamp program the Food Assistance Program, effective Nov. 7. The program increases the food purchasing power of low-income households.

"Michigan is now administering the Food Assistance Program," said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. "The Food Stamp program has seen no fundamental changes since 1977. We believe it is time to modernize the program; what better way to start than with the name?"

In July 2001, the FIA completed implementation of Electronic Benefits Transfer, a process that delivers Food Assistance Program and Family Independence Program benefits electronically, eliminating the issuance of food stamp coupons and checks.

"Some will see this as merely a symbolic change," said Governor John Engler. "But it is sending an important message to the customers, the public and our leaders in Washington that Michigan is moving this program into the future."

For fiscal year 2001, an average of 274,526 families representing 623,335 individuals received food assistance on a monthly basis. Howard indicated that while the name change is effective immediately, it will take several months to phase in as policies, notices, and program literature are updated.

Calhoun County project hits "zero"

Lower Peninsula county is 91st community to achieve goal

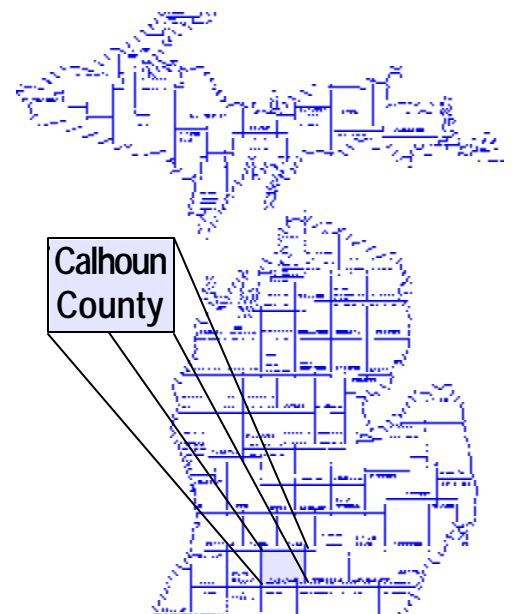
The Calhoun County Project Zero program reached "zero" September 12, when all targeted Family Independence Program cases in the county were reporting earnings. Calhoun County became the 91st site to reach the benchmark.

"Zero" is the point in time when all target FIP cases are working and earning income. Target cases are those open 60 days, required to participate in the Work First program and expected to have earnings.

"I am tremendously proud of efforts by FIA staff and customers, Work First, Michigan Works!, Goodwill Industries and others to reach this milestone," said Calhoun County Family Independence Agency director Katherine L. Haines. "We all traveled a long road to reach zero and the trip has been as valuable as the achievement."

Project Zero—which started in 1996 and is being carried out in 103 sites—is a cooperative effort involving state and local agencies, businesses and service providers. Local projects access state resources through formal agreements between state and local agencies.

■ For more information consult the FIA website at www.mfia.state.mi.us and click on "Project Zero"



Anthrax warning

State agencies issue warning to state employees

LANSING—The following message issued jointly from Michigan departments of Management and Budget and Community Health was circulated to all Family Independence Agency employees Oct. 15:

In light of recent events, the Departments of Management and Budget and Community Health are issuing the following critical information regarding Anthrax threats and the Anthrax bacteria.

**AMERICA
AT RISK**



The Department of Management and Budget has received information from the United States Postmaster regarding Anthrax threats made by mail. We are asking all employees to read the following instructions thoroughly and proceed carefully when handling mail.

Be alert for suspicious parcels

What constitutes a “suspicious parcel?” Some typical characteristics Postal Inspectors have detected over the years, which ought to trigger suspicion, include parcels that:

- Are unexpected or from someone unfamiliar to you.
- Are addressed to someone no longer with your organization or are otherwise outdated.
- Have no return address, or have one that can’t be verified as legitimate.
- Are of unusual weight, given their size, or are lopsided or oddly shaped.
- Are marked with restrictive endorsements, such as “Personal” or “Confidential.”
- Have protruding wires, strange odors or stains.
- Show a city or state in the postmark that doesn’t match the return address.

Managing suspicious parcels

What to do if you receive a suspicious parcel in the mail or if you receive an Anthrax threat by mail:

- Do not handle the mail piece or package suspected of contamination.
- Notify your supervisor, who will immediately contact the Inspection Service, local police, safety office or designated person.
- Make sure that damaged or suspicious packages are isolated and the immediate area cordoned off.
- Ensure that all persons who have touched the mail piece wash their hands with soap and water.
- The Inspectors will collect the mail, assess the threat situation and coordinate with the FBI.
- Designated officials will notify local, county, and state health departments.
- Designated officials will notify the state emergency manager.
- List all persons who have touched the letter and/or envelope. Include contact information. Provide the list to the Inspection Service.
- Place all items worn when in contact with the suspected mail piece in plastic bags and keep them wherever you change your clothes and have them available for law enforcement agents.
- As soon as practical, shower with soap and water. If prescribed medication by medical personnel, take it until otherwise instructed or it runs out.
- Notify the Center for Disease Control Emergency Response at 770-488-7100 for answers to any questions.



FIA Icon

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency



The challenges of our time

Life is full of big and little challenges. I spent all year getting used to writing 2001, and now it's about time to begin writing 2002. Some people have called this year two-thousand-one while others have called it twenty-oh-one. I think of these as little challenges. I'm sure you do, too.

I attended a conference in October where people from the Family Independence Agency, affiliated state agencies, the U.S. Congress and University of Michigan hashed over issues related to federal reauthorization of the welfare reform act, which is scheduled for consideration by Congress next year. That will be a great challenge for all of us.

Implementing the Child Support Enforcement System brings to fruition a 17-year conversion involving our agency and courts in every county (see story on page 10). Another challenge met, many more to come.

The new state Department of Information Technology starts another transition for us. We support the transition of staff and functions to the new department. It is important to remember the important role played by information technology staff in our agency and how their efforts support our ability to be successful with customers.

We know through the success of Project Zero that partnerships are a key to success in serving our communities. Under the new department, information technology remains a partner in the FIA's ability to serve Michigan citizens.

Bigger challenges are before us, too. What's happened in our country and what's happening around the world present challenges to us as Americans and citizens, challenges to our patriotism, sense of home and optimism—and possibly our health—that are without precedent.

Even if you lived through Pearl Harbor, the Kennedy assassination, Watergate, Kent State, the Challenger tragedy or another calamity, there has probably never been a time in your life quite like today. Certainly there has never been a time for any of us when we have been warned about how to handle mail that might be contaminated with chemical agents.

Now it appears our next challenge may be economic, as declining state revenues have us looking anew at everything we do that relates to spending public money.

You may have heard about challenges during Customer Service Training, that our work is a series of challenges. The challenges are sometimes beyond our control, but we always have choices in the way we respond to them, and the way we respond helps define who we are.

Thanks for your help and cooperation as we move forward toward our next challenge in the Family Independence Agency.

Livingston Co. wraparound recognition night

FIA and partner employees honored for their efforts

By Carol A. Davis

Livingston County Family Independence Agency, Howell

Telephone (517) 548-0247

"Wraparound" is a community process that is successful for families and children because of people who care, contribute and embrace the philosophy.

On Sept. 20 Livingston County wraparound coordinator Kim Batsche-McKenzie and her staff recognized many people for their contributions to the wraparound program. Among those recognized from the local Livingston County FIA office were Sue Hostetler, Howard Majtyka, Carol Davis, Jeanette Freeland, Karen Luck, Doug Marchyok, Steve Purdy, Mark Perkins, Lora Stitman, & Adele Stocker.

The Hon. Susan L. Reck, Chief Judge of Probate and 44th Circuit Courts, presented "Wrapper of the Year" Awards to Karen Luck of Livingston FIA, Marilyn Bradford from Livingston County Prosecutors Office, and Amy Kuehn from Livingston County Juvenile Court.

"Karen Luck has been referring kids to wraparound for many years," said Judge Reck. "She consistently goes above and beyond in her efforts to maintain children in the community.

"In her willingness to work early, late or both, Karen shows an amazing dedication and professionalism that truly benefits Livingston County. As a team member, Karen shows a genuine desire to collaborate, strengthen families and maintain a positive approach in working toward identified goals.

"Her experience and humor, mingled with respect for families and children make her an asset to any team fortunate enough to have her as a member. Karen believes in the strengths of children and families and this philosophy transcends beyond her Wraparound families and into all she does.

"We would like to acknowledge Karen's hard work, willingness to go the extra mile and dedication to Livingston County's children and families."

During the program, the Hammond Wraparound Team presented a "Family Perspective on Wrap-around". Steve Purdy, Livingston County FIA children's services worker, is a member of the group.

Robert Davidson, Livingston FIA children's services supervisor, ended the awards ceremony with very thought provoking closing remarks. Many Livingston County businesses contributed items to make it a very special evening for all.

Most counties provide wraparound services for children and families at risk of placement. The process can be applied to youth living in their own home, with relatives or in foster care. It is family-centered, strength-based and needs driven.

Wraparound is a process based on collaboration and working with community resources. The parents and children are integral parts of the team and must have ownership in the individualized plan.



At wraparound recognition night (left to right): Judge Susan Reck, Robert Davidson, Livingston County children's services supervisor; Karen Luck, Livingston County foster care worker; Millie Shepherd, wraparound staff; Kim Batsche-McKenzie, wraparound coordinator; Jan Smith and Angelo Powell, wraparound staff.

September Achiever award goes to Kalamazoo resident Reqwal Heard

Southwest Michigan woman is 94th recipient of state award

By Mary Cagney, Project Zero Coordinator

Kalamazoo County Family Independence Agency, Kalamazoo

Telephone (616) 337-5161



Reqwal Heard with Linda Moffett, her mother-in-law, and son Jaqwan.

Kalamazoo—At a Sept. 19 ceremony Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard presented the 94th Achiever of the Month award to Reqwal Heard of Kalamazoo County. Howard congratulated Reqwal on the achievement of her personal and professional goals that will enable her to become independent.

Established in 1993, the Achiever of the Month award is given to current or former public assistance customers who have made outstanding progress toward self-sufficiency.

Reqwal first came to the Family Independence Agency in May 1995, six months after the birth of her first child, Quinton. She received Family Independence Program, Medicaid and Food Stamp benefits. After receiving FIP for five months Reqwal's case closed because of earnings from a part-time job.

She managed to juggle a job, school and raising a child but was never able to move into economic independence. Reqwal found herself coming back to the Family Independence Agency on and off over the next six years for help with FIP, Child Day Care, Food Stamps, State Emergency Relief and employment support services.

Reqwal told the audience she realized that finishing her education was the key to her family's independence. She first began pursuing a degree in elementary education in 1988. She received academic and athletic scholarships at Jackson State University in Jackson, Miss.

She transferred to Mott Community College in Flint, where she earned an associate's degree. Later, she attended the University of Michigan in Flint and finally, Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

Reqwal indicated that her mother had been instrumental in her accomplishments and she had constantly encouraged her to finish her education.

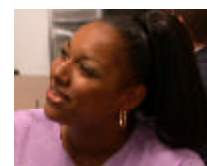
After employment in retail sales Reqwal was hired by National City Bank where she was employed for three years. As her college demands changed, her employer maintained her as part-time or in on-call status. While completing a semester long internship at Indian Prairie School Reqwal was only able to work eight hours per week. It was during this time that she faced some of her toughest financial problems and found herself increasingly discouraged.

Her family independence specialist, Janice Brown, encouraged her to reapply for FIP benefits. Reqwal said, "She was always there to help me. She truly cares how you are doing."

Reqwal completed her college education, received her bachelor's degree and teaching certificate on June 23, 2001. She was hired by the Kalamazoo Public School District and started her new teaching position at Northglade Elementary in August. Reqwal indicated that she would be pursuing a master's degree program through the Kalamazoo school district.

Reqwal dreamt of a different life and managed to attain it through hard work and perseverance. She wants to encourage others to work toward their goals.

Reqwal left the audience with this message: "If I can do it, then so can others."



Reqwal Heard

Behavior based interview training

Getting a handle on “behavioral” job interviews coming soon to the FIA

By Michael Downer, Director of Personnel Services

FIA Office of Human Resources

Telephone (517) 373-8874

“Tell me of a time when you were under a great deal of pressure, yet were able to keep focused and complete the task at hand. In what activity were you engaged? What did you do to control your stress?”

This is the type of question being asked in employment interviews throughout the FIA. These are known as “behavioral” questions because they ask the candidate to provide an answer based on past experiences or behaviors.

The concept at the core of this process is that past behavior predicts future behavior. The other new aspect is the use of follow up questions.

Interview process

The interview panel generally will consist of three people. As an interviewer asks a behavioral question and the candidate answers, the interviewer is looking for a description of the circumstances in which the candidate was involved, the actions the candidate took and the outcome of those actions.

If the candidate does not answer with those elements, the interviewer will ask a follow up question geared toward filling in the specific aspects of the situation, the actions taken and the results achieved. Interviewers may ask numerous follow up questions until they are satisfied. All candidates in an interview process are asked the same behavioral questions, though the follow up questions will vary with each individual.

This type of interview has been around for a number of years. It is new to state government but has been used in the private sector for some time. It has been our experience that we get very good selections from interviews that use this process.

Training in place

Supervisors and managers throughout the FIA are being trained in this process. At some point in 2002 it will be mandatory that this process be used. This has been a concern for some candidates who feel unprepared to interview in this process.

Preparation for a traditional interview involved learning about the organization and the position to be filled, as well as preparing answers to expected questions. Preparation for a behavioral interview should be more a review of one’s career to date. The candidate should think about times in the past when (s)he exhibited a skill or competency. What was the situation in which they were engaged? What did he or she do? How did the situation turn out?

The candidate should also be aware that if they cannot think of a pertinent situation in their work life, that they could also use an example from their experiences in school, personal life or some other example that shows the candidate used a particular competency to handle a situation.

Bottom line: competency

The key is to be able to describe clearly and succinctly how one had exhibited a skill or competency in a past situation. The description should include the circumstances, the actions taken and the result.

To assist candidates in preparing for behavioral interviews, the Office of Human Resources suggests visiting the following websites:

- <http://www.uwec.edu/Admin/Career/careerplanning/JobSearch/FAQ/10biv.html>
- <http://career.indstate.edu/yes/behavior.html>
- <http://career.idswb.com/prepared.htm>

These sites have no connection to the FIA and the behavioral interviewing systems they describe are not exactly the same as used by FIA, but conceptually they are the same processes. There may be differences in terminology or specific process followed, but the general information is pertinent to any behavioral interview process.

Intercepted letters

Date: Oct. 11
To: Carol Kraklan, Department Analyst
FIA Child and Family Services Administration, Lansing
Subj: Your work

Seeing you yesterday reminded me of how much I marvel at your talents, skills and knowledge and how much you are helping the agency right now. So I thought I would take a minute to let you know (and your bosses, too!).

I appreciate that you are a skilled policy developer and writer who is always on top of policy and able (and so pleasantly willing) to help the field with questions. But I am in awe of your understanding of federal regs and audits and your ability to translate those for this agency.

You are a real asset to us (FIA) as the two federal audits approach. Your grasp of what needs to be done, your understanding of the best way to get it done, your openness to the ideas of others, and your

ability to handle this overwhelming project with style and grace are truly amazing! You are so calm and easy going about all of it that I think those around you just assume it's no big deal and probably take what you do for granted. But I see that you manage to run here and there to do training, to visit another state to learn about the audit process, to attend Zone and community meetings, etc., while still getting the paper-work and planning end done.

I am also amazed and appreciative of the ease with which you are able to meet with community "big shots" like judges, prosecutors and agency heads to explain IV-E. In case you can't tell, I am very impressed by you and so glad we have you doing what you are doing! Thanks, Carol!

Lynn Searls, Zone Services Specialist
FIA Zone 3 Office, Lansing

■ "We have been focusing on giving everyone leadership opportunities," said Jim Beougher, director of the FIA Child and Family Services Administration. "Carol Kraklan is an analyst and a year ago we gave her leadership role in planning for HHS/ Child and Family Services Review. We frequently receive similar comments about how well she has done. The goal of the process is that through such opportunities the job gets done and people grow as well."

Date: Oct. 2
To: Terry Wilson, Family Independence Specialist
Ogemaw County Family Independence Agency, West Branch
Subj: Many thanks

I am writing due to exceptional work you performed for my family. This is to let you know you are appreciated and to encourage you for being so wonderful. You are a blessing and very special person to my family. I think you work extremely fast and accurate. Your performance was excellent, fast and proper. I honestly believe you went out of your way to help us to your fullest ability. In the midst of our crisis you showed us respect while allowing us to keep our dignity. You have blessed us for our entire life and we will never forget your kindness and concern for our family. Thanks you for a speedy resolution to our problem.

The other staff we worked with were fantastic as well as friendly. Nobody looked at us rude, talked behind our backs, treated us unkind, acted like we were trouble to help, and we appreciate everyone's sincere sympathy. I think everyone working there is special to endure different types of crisis that go on in other people's lives. You all deserve a hero's award for your hard work. Thanks to all of you at the Ogemaw County Family Independence Agency for making a difference in our lives and community.

Dawn RC Allen
Prescott

there are more [Intercepted letters](#) on page 8



Date: Sept. 17
To: Jim Nye, Director, FIA Outstate Operations, Lansing
Jim Aebli, Director, Houghton County FIA, Houghton
Subj: Passing on thanks

I visited Houghton County the first part of September to meet with the directors to discuss issues surrounding this year's allocation. As I was leaving the motel, the woman at the counter noted I was from Lansing and FIA. She told me how much she appreciated the staff at FIA for helping her through some very difficult times. Apparently her husband died unexpectedly and she needed help badly. She asked me to take the message back to Lansing just how wonderful the staff was. It was the kind of chance meeting that reminded me what important work we do and how well we do it.

Michael Connell, Manager
FIA Staffing Standards and Allocation Section

Date: Sept. 6
To: David Eaton, Family Independence Manager
Calhoun County Family Independence Agency, Battle Creek
Subj: Ann Dyas

I am writing on behalf of my mother, Minnie L. Miles, who is a client of Ann Dyas. My mother is a very proud elderly woman who just had her fourth heart attack and a stroke. She has enormous medical bills I am seeking help to try and resolve so she can afford to live. We had an appointment with Ann in which she was just wonderful. She treated us with respect and concern. Never once did my mother feel ashamed or humiliated because she was asking for help, which was very hard for her. Ann was kind and helpful. She is a caring and kind lady who treats you with dignity. We praise her for her ability to do her job and make everyone feel comfortable. I would very much like to see this letter put in Ann's file in case in the future she should need a recommendation on her efforts and expertise.

Linda L. Shorter
Ceresco, Mich.

■ Ann Dyas is an eligibility specialist with Calhoun County FIA in Battle Creek. Ms. Miles is from Battle Creek, also.

Date: Sept. 3
To: Julia Hadas, Director
Marquette County Family Independence Agency, Marquette
Subj: Thanks!

You do not know me but I feel the need to take this time to commend you and the agency for the work they do. As a one-time professional nurse I know you often hear the criticism but seldom the compliments. The past two years have been a nightmare for me and I have had to call my worker so many times for help or information about where to get help. Your people have been so very kind and respectful and I don't know how you do it with the caseloads you have. Clary Vaughn...there are no words to compliment her enough; she is very professional and always courteous and as helpful as she can be. I believe your agency is one of the finest in the state and I want to thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart.

Joanne M. Fowler
Marquette

■ Clary Vaughn is an eligibility specialist with Marquette County FIA.

Date: Aug. 9
To: Chuck Clemens, Adult Service Worker
Roscommon County Family Independence Agency, Roscommon
Subj: Recovery

I told you I could do it. I'm up and walking! July 31 was Michelle's last day with me. I have to tell you, it has been a long hard road and I'm not to the end of it yet. I will get there. I'm writing to thank you. I

the rest is on page 9

know you were the only person that believed me when I said I could do this. Knowing you were on my side did help me a lot. Please tell others not to give up.

Tammy Mathews
Houghton Lake

■ The writer had been a Home Help provider for one of Clemens' customers. She had partial paralysis as a result of a fall in autumn 2000. "Tammy never gave up even though, in her weakened condition, she was susceptible to every cold and virus last winter. She even had one kidney stop working in December," said Dennis Szagesh of Roscommon County FIA. "In July, after nearly 10 months of intensive physical therapy, Tammy discharged her Home Help Services caregiver and reported to Mr. Clemens that she's 'up and walking'. We find Tammy to be quite an inspiration."

Date: July 30
To: Mike Pavlov, CPS Supervisor
Grand Traverse County Family Independence Agency, Traverse City
Subj: Rhonda Richards

On July 24, a hearing was held before Judge Stowe on the "Ed" matter. He was accused of (criminal misconduct). The protective service worker involved was Rhonda Richards.

The defense counsel claimed his confession was involuntary. Thus, I called Rhonda Richards as a witness. Ms. Richards was well prepared, very knowledgeable in her job and in the dynamics of interviewing children. Ms. Richards expressed herself as a caring diligent professional.

I was fortunate to work with Ms. Richards on this delicate case. I found her to be cooperative and helpful. I applaud you and your department for having persons the caliber of Rhonda Richards on your staff. I look forward to working with her in the future. I ask that a copy of this letter be placed in her personnel file, so others who may evaluate her will know the position of our office regarding assistance in this case.

Michael J. Stein, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
Grand Traverse County, Traverse City

■ There's no "Ed". The case name was changed. Rhonda Richards is a CPS employee of Grand Traverse County FIA.

FIA director Doug Howard received these letters in August from FIA customers who received their clothing allowance. Names and cities are deleted to protect case confidentiality. The smaller type is to get it on this page!

Dear Mr. Howard.....

I just want to thank you so much for the clothing gift. I really, really, really appreciate it. I am a 76 year young great (mother) grandmother.

Love & Blessings,

Connie

I am writing you in regards to the letter I got with an invoice paper stating I will receive \$75 for each one of my children for school clothing...because without it my children wouldn't have had any new clothes. I want to thank you very much for the program. I never really (have) seen how much new clothing means to my kids. They were all smiles and have been very excited about going back to school. Thank you very much once again sir.

Holly

She ran down the aisle so fast, it's as though she was flying. The giggles, the smiles, as she went through the aisles. She was doing the buying, knew just what to get. What sizes would fit. The styles, the clothes, had to be just right. To pick out her clothes was such a delight. Every outfit she picked had to be just right. She modeled them, chose just the right ones, now her first days will be such fun. Thank you for the clothing grant for our granddaughter.

Grandma Pam

Because of my disability my handwriting is bad. I'm writing to you to say "Thank you." The extra income does help when kids do have to go to school. I apologize for not thanking you last year.

Dianna

I just wanted to send out "thanks" for the children's clothing allowance. As it did for us, I know it helps many families with the "back to school" expense. It's a wonderful program and we thank you and the FIA.

Angela & Brook



CSES went statewide Oct. 1

Child Support Enforcement System now serving all counties All child support cases in Michigan linked via electronic system

After 17 years trying, Michigan's Child Support Enforcement System began operating in all 83 counties Oct. 1.

When the Oakland County Friend of the Court successfully converted to CSES Sept. 28 and the Wayne County Friend of the Court completed conversion to CSES-Generation II over the weekend of Sept. 29-30, the last two counties joined the required reporting system.

The Child Support Enforcement System is an electronic data system that tracks child support cases through the FIA Office of Child Support, county Friend of the Court offices and prosecutors.

"Congratulations to FIA, the counties and courts that worked diligently to make this a reality," said Gov. John Engler. "This system provides us with the tools to better serve children and families who depend on full and timely child support payments."

Cost avoidance another benefit

Meeting the Oct. 1 deadline will, when the system is certified, mean the state avoided additional fines for noncompliance. Failure to achieve this in earlier years kept Michigan from meeting federal requirements and has cost the state \$69 million in penalties to the federal government since 1997.

"The counties, courts and FIA have been partners in making this system operational, said FIA director Douglas E. Howard.

Michigan worked at building the system since 1984, developing the hardware and bringing counties online in a piecemeal process, changing project contractors—and having project specifications changed because of new federal requirements—several times during the process. The greatest push occurred over the last nine months of project activity.

"Many people said it was impossible to bring up 10 counties—representing 54 percent of the state-wide child support cases with orders—on the system in under nine months," said Howard.

"We know how to rise to a challenge and succeed."

In addition to Wayne and Oakland counties, the other county Friend of the Court offices involved in the last nine months (and the months they joined CSES) were: Clinton in May; Grand Traverse (includes Antrim & Leelanau) and Ingham in July; Berrien in August; St. Clair and Genesee in September.

Large caseload

All tolled, the CSES now serves all 713,000 Michigan child support cases with court orders and the 290,000 cases in the order establishment process. Michigan annually collects and distributes more than \$1.3 billion in child support payments. Howard contacted the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement to request a federal review and certification of Michigan's system. The federal certification process could take up to one year to complete. Once Michigan's CSES is certified by federal officials, the state should be eligible to have some earlier fines refunded. In addition, a penalty of approximately \$50 million for noncompliance in 2002 would be avoided.

"I am proud of the Friend of the Court staff, administrators and judges who pulled together with state conversion teams to develop a statewide child support system," said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Maura Corrigan of the key players in the conversion effort.

CSES history

The Child Support Enforcement program was created by the U. S. government in 1975 to help collect child support for children who needed support from both parents. The object of enforcing support obligations was to prevent poverty among children and to reduce welfare rolls.

At its inception, the primary target of federal legislation was to reduce welfare costs. State agencies that supervise welfare programs referred cases to state-established agencies responsible for child support enforcement.

In the early 1980s, the child support enforcement program was expanded to provide services to custodial parents who were not receiving welfare. This was done to prevent families from needing to apply for AFDC and to assist those on AFDC to leave the entitlement program.

States are required to establish agencies to collect child support for custodial parents who receive welfare and those who do not. The federal legislation was enacted as Section (D) of Title IV of the Social Security Act. Hence, state child support agencies are often referred to as IV-D agencies.

The federal government regulates and provides major funding for state child support enforcement programs. States implement the program by enacting their own laws creating and empowering local agencies. In Michigan, the FIA Office of Child Support is the designated Title IV-D agency.

Five basic services

IV-D agencies offer five basic services: locating the absent parent; establishing paternity; establishing child support orders; establishing medical support orders; enforcing and collecting child support, spousal support, and medical support orders.

In Michigan, most enforcement duties of the child support program were already being carried out by the local Circuit Court, through its Friend of the Court offices, since 1919. As a result, the Office of Child Support contracted with local Friend of the Court offices to carry out federal program requirements.

The Friend of the Court enforces child support orders, disburses payments and agrees to abide by federal Title IV-D requirements. Local prosecuting attorneys, under contract with the Office of Child Support, have largely performed order establishment functions.

The federal government—through amendments to the Family Support Act of 1984—provided funding for all states to install single, statewide, automated computer enforcement systems. The Family Support Act of 1988 then required that all states comply with system requirements.

Information sharing the goal

The goal of CSES is to improve sharing of child support information across the nation by setting a common standard for organizing information and by connecting county and state-level offices through a statewide network. CSES has modules to establish and maintain court order information, cash receipting, distribution and other financial transactions, and child support enforcement for arrearage cases. It provides data to federal databases shared by other states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and American Samoa. Sharing information offers improved enforcement of interstate cases where one party does not reside in the same state as the child. It is estimated one in three cases nationally involve parents in two states.

The Michigan Office of Child Support, operating as the statewide administrative oversight unit, in cooperation with the State Court Administrative Office and the Prosecuting Attorney's Association of Michigan, assisted in the development of the statewide, automated enforcement system.

The Office of Child Support's major role is carrying out fiscal and administrative project management and reviewing program operations like development and statewide program implementation. This includes interpreting federal program regulations, reimbursing program costs to Friend of the Court offices and prosecuting attorneys, installation and maintenance of computer hardware and software, technical support and training, calculating the statewide program cost, and reporting costs and other information to the federal government. Other roles include coordination of state parent locator-related activities, federal and state income tax offset statewide activities, federal and state case registries, and electronic data exchange with the state Medicaid system and other state of Michigan databases. It is responsible for establishing cooperative program operation agreements with Friend of the Court and prosecuting attorney offices.

Other roles, partners

Through an interagency agreement with the FIA, the Michigan Supreme Court's State Court Administrative Office provides technical assistance and court related services as they pertain to Michigan's Judicial based child support program. The county prosecutor establishes paternity, if necessary, obtains court orders for support in nondivorce cases, and prosecutes felony nonsupport cases.

■ A Senate Fiscal Agency analysis, FIA Office of Child Support and Internet sources contributed to this story.

Meet OFAP training

FIA's unit that trains staff delivering cash assistance and related services

By Anne Sinicropi Sigourney and Sheila Barbour

FIA Office of Financial Assistance Programs

Telephone (517) 335-6291

Many, many years ago in olden times there existed a place called the Office of Training and Staff Development, more familiarly known as OTSD. Alas, that place is but a distant memory now. Even though you may see those letters on the occasional document or sign within the Family Independence Agency, OTSD does not exist.



A few years ago, as part of a reengineering initiative, FIA training was reorganized. Each program office became responsible for its own training unit. This article will introduce you to the training staff of one of those program offices, the Office of Financial Assistance Programs (OFAP). The OFAP is administered through the FIA Family Independence Services Administration.

Administrative, training leadership



Judith Galant

Training for family independence specialists, eligibility specialists and family independence managers (FIS, ES and FIM) is currently developed and delivered by 32 trainers, four secretaries and five managers. Field and Central Office staff and outside contractors are recruited from time to time for input, advice and assistance. Besides classroom and web-based training (via blackboard.com), desk-job aids and video conferencing are some of the ways training is provided.

There are a wide variety of experiences among trainers ranging from employees with over 25 years experience to new trainers hired in 2001. All have worked in local offices at one time. And even though divvied up in separate units, there are many joint projects under way.

Anne Wineman, an FIA employee with training since 1976, is responsible for the Food Stamp Reinvestment Unit and the new ES worker training.

Randy Friday and Dawn Callahan manage those units. Judith Galant and Pat Potvin are curriculum developers.

Sandy Zwemer, an FIA employee for over 25 years, is in charge of training for experienced staff and new FIS. Anne Sigourney reports to Sandy and manages the unit responsible for new worker training for FIS.

Excellent secretarial support is the backbone of OFAP training. Jan Prince, Jude Roach, Barbara Price and Lois Corson make sure deadlines are met, supplies and training materials reach their destination, and all logistical plans are secured. They are also patient and always know how to get things done.

The majority of OFAP training staff is located in Lansing's Grand Tower 13th floor. A few are based in the Plaza building in Detroit, but will soon move to newly remodeled offices in the Dearborn Training Center. Staff looks forward to this move for many reasons, not the least of which is accessible, free parking.



From left: Sandy Zwemer, Mary Gartland, Linda Baird and Jan Prince.



Kari Mardyla and Miguel Sanchez

Training new employees

New ES trainers are primarily responsible for the development and delivery of a three-week training for new ES staff. In addition, they offer Medical Assistance L/H (long-term care/hospitalization) classes, as well as FIP-related MA.

In response to field requests they are now developing a comprehensive SSI-related MA package. Some are working on web-based courses through blackboard.com on "Recoupment" and on "Expedited Food Stamps". Trainers on this staff are Debra Berne, Judy Brock, Tom Ferrence, Linda Hayton, Rod Hovey and Jim Sweeney.

Food Stamp

Reinvestment
trainers have

recently begun training several courses identified by field and Zone staff as areas of concern. These are "Workload Management", "Unearned Income Reports" and "Technology". Staff came on board in April 2001 and has been very busy with the development and delivery of these classes, aimed to help reduce the Food Stamp error rate. Trainers are Carla Argue, Ursula Barrett, Victoria Falcon-Eggert, Linda Kusnier, Kari Mardyla, Deon Nelson, Rhonda Reyes and Miguel Sanchez.



Rod Hovey

Promoting strong families

Trainers for FIA experienced staff are now involved with training "Promoting Strong Families" (PSF) to help prepare FIS and FIM staff to perform prevention duties. Many weeks were spent developing, practicing and piloting the various components of this training initiative. Training is now under way.

Some members of this unit also are involved in developing and providing training in solution focused interviewing, "Cruise to Success", State Emergency Relief and FIP-Related MA. The Child Day Care sessions this past spring and summer also involved many of the trainers on this staff. Staff members are Judy Ansuini, Linda Baird, Mary Jo Beshara, Mary Gartland, Stacie Gibson, Bonnie Reno, Jackie Stamper, Cheryl Thompson and Jeannie Young.

Finally, we introduce the staff persons who train new FIS. The core class they are responsible for is a 17-day "Basic FIS training" for all newly hired staff. Trainers are responsible for regularly updating this package, and coming up with new methods of delivery.

Members of this staff are also involved in training FIP-Related MA, SER and CDC. Currently, some staff are participating in the PSF project, which is expected to run at least through December 2002. Staff members include Sheila Barbour, Mike Farrell, Deryl Gardner, Lupe Koutsoubos, Luann Mularz, Carolyn Perry and Rochelle Ward.

The Office of Financial Assistance Programs training staff is dedicated to providing the best quality and the most timely product to our customers. We are always open to comments or suggestions, so feel free to contact any one of us at any time.



Rochelle Ward

Birth match system six-month update

State system matches new births to abusive parents, results in 11 children placed in foster care

A new system implemented last year resulted in 11 children being removed from abusive households over its first six months of operation.

The birth match system is the result of a Family Independence Agency-Department of Community Health partnership first announced in September 2000. It matches information from Central Registry of parents with new birth data from the Department of Community Health. The matches officially began in March 2001.

It alerts the FIA to births in families where children have been previously removed for abuse or neglect reasons and parental rights have been terminated.

The system periodically matches all new births to an FIA database of 34,000 parents who have had their parental rights terminated in the past. The results are forwarded to FIA Child Protective Services workers across Michigan to call on the newborn's family and assess the situation.

In the first six months of operation, that system showed 389 births in those households. Children's Protective Services had already investigated more than 200 of those families before the new birth match occurred. Another seven matches proved inaccurate and 41 inquiries are still outstanding.

CPS investigations of the remaining 129 matches resulted in 11 newborns being removed and placed in foster care and services being provided at home to another 13 newborns. In 105 other investigations, CPS determined there was no risk to the newborn.

"The birth match system responds to issues raised by the Office of the Children's Ombudsman," said state FIA director Douglas Howard. "We are now better able to fulfill our obligations to newborn children in potentially risky situations."

Michigan law requires the FIA to do an assessment of risk to newborn children in homes where children were permanently removed. Before the link to vital statistics, the FIA was unable to routinely verify new births. All matches produced through the reporting system are verified at local offices to ensure the match is accurate. For those not previously investigated, CPS staff conduct an investigation in the household to ensure the child is not at current risk from factors that earlier led to termination of rights.

If the evidence indicates risk factors are present, CPS staff will take appropriate action up to and including removing the child from the home and petitioning a Family Court to terminate the parents' rights. Under the five-category CPS process, the range of actions may include taking no action to referral to community resources to active CPS involvement to removal and court action to terminate parental rights.

My locks of love

By Amy Boone, Foster Care Specialist
Monroe County Family Independence Agency, Monroe
Telephone (743) 243-7447

I was ready for a big change in my life.

My hair has looked the same since I was four years old, so why not? I hated the thought of my hair going to waste, so I thought about donating it to people who would get great use out of it.

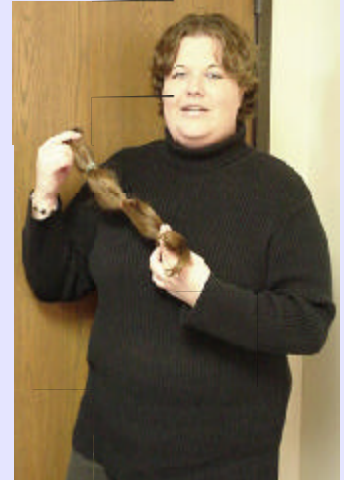
I first heard of Palm Springs, Fla.-based Locks of Love when researching the Internet. This program stood out to

me because it helps children. Locks of Love is a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to children who suffer from long-term medical hair loss.

I know how important my hair is to me – it helps define who I am. So, I thought why not boost a child's self-esteem and confidence by giving him/her my hair?

On Oct. 15 I had a 14-inch ponytail cut off. Having a haircut always feels good, but this time it felt great! Not only did I walk away with a brand-new "do", but I also went away with feeling like I really helped a child.

If you would like more information about the Locks of Love program, call toll-free (888) 896-1588. You may find them on the Internet at www.locksoflove.org



Adult outreach program

Oakman District works to develop outreach service in Wayne County

By Beverly Duncombe

Wayne County Family Independence Agency Oakman District, Detroit

Telephone (313) 934-8084

DETROIT—The Oakman District is the only full-service district in Wayne County designed to address the needs of adults. This distinction creates a responsibility and duty, as well as a need for collaboration with other districts and the community.

Through the tutoring of Derle Barnes, former interim Oakman District manager, two informational teams were created in September 2000. The formation of the teams generated an Outreach Program consisting of two phases. In Phase I there was collaboration with other districts; in Phase II, there was collaboration with the community.

Our collaboration with other districts was intended to inform our colleagues and coworkers about the adult services programs and increase the utilization of the services we offer such as Independent Living Services, Adult Protective Services and Adult Community Placement.

A one-hour presentation includes an outline of adult services programs, an adult services informational packet and a question and answer session.

Phase II of the Outreach Program was initiated in July 2001 through the tutoring of Barbara Nelson, Oakman District manager. The Informational Team (Phase II) began its community outreach in July at a complex consisting of seniors and persons with disabilities. All occupants had fixed incomes and were in need of an effective partnership with FIA to improve the quality of their life.

The residents requested and received applications for food benefits and home help services. Applications for food benefits were forwarded to the Wayne County Grand River-Warren District for determination and disposition.

It is important to note the internal collaboration because no program can be an entity unto itself. The onsite contact provided support and empowerment to the residents and their concerns were validated by the presence of FIA.

The outreach program is a vehicle to enhance human service delivery and a means to strengthen individuals striving to maintain their dignity and independence. It is commendable to operate under a vision statement that says, "The FIA will be the national leader in human services delivery through employee commitment, customer focus, technology, innovation and effective partnerships."

The reality of the vision is based on being customer focused and committed to provide premier service. We have the technology, and innovation, and the community has established the need.

To schedule a meeting with the Oakman District informational teams contact Beverly Duncombe, central coordinator by telephone, email DuncombeB or fax (313) 934-2015.

L. O. News is Good News

The latest news from local offices.....

FIELD OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION / WAYNE COUNTY



■ This story was reprinted from a Wayne County publication. "The Office of Adult Services commends the Oakman District for their community initiative and encourages local Adult Services units to consider similar projects," said Robert Cecil, director of the FIA Office of Adult Services. "This is an example of Teaming For Excellence while 'being' the Adult Services vision, which is to develop effective community partnerships that will protect vulnerable adults and ensure a high quality of life, by advocating for equal access to resources and services, for our least advantaged residents."

Kids, computers and a state employee

School leave enables Wayne County employee to give something back

By Gene Hashley, Communications Director

Wayne County Family Independence Agency, Detroit

Telephone (313) 256-1560

DETROIT—Keeping the attention of a group of first and second grade students for an hour after their school day ended was a challenge for Charles Lee, a systems analyst for the Wayne County Family Independence Agency.

But for two hours a week—consisting of one-hour sessions twice weekly—for 16 weeks, Lee worked with the students at the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Academy and taught them word processing, spread sheets and web page construction.

Lee initially used his eight hours of school leave to work with the students and when winter semester ended he had used several hours of annual leave as well.

The Academy, a Detroit Public School that is included in the state's "Schools of the 21st Century" school reform initiative, obtained new Apple laptop computers through a grant and was seeking someone to teach the students basic computer skills in the Academy's after school enrichment program.

David Lewis, Wayne County FIA's volunteer coordinator, approached Lee and he accepted the challenge.

"I grew up in Detroit Public Schools and this is my way of giving something back," said Lee, who graduated from Detroit Western High School. He also wanted to give students exposure to computers at an early age.

"Even with their short attention spans, the students learned basic word processing and they created a table in Excel, where they entered numbers in the boxes and the computer added them up," Lee said.

He also taught them some basic HTML web page code and each student composed a web page. This experience also gave Lee an appreciation for educators.

"They are real special people to be able to do this all day, every day," Lee said.

Now that fall semester is under way, Lee has been invited to return to the Academy to work with first and second graders and another school has asked him to work with fifth graders.

"I'm trying to figure out a way to do both," Lee said.



Above center: Charles Lee with Academy principal Mary Bronson (right) and Roberta Marek, coordinator of the after school enrichment program.

FIA staffer attends nat'l conference

Hillsdale worker shares ideas with peers and federal officials

By Virginia P. Moseley

National Association of Eligibility Workers

Telephone (740) 525-1991

Linda McLain of Hillsdale, representing the Hillsdale County FIA, recently returned from Spokane, Wash. where she attended the 26th training conference of the National Eligibility Workers Association.

Eligibility professionals from across the country participated in the conference. McLain is a family independence specialist with Hillsdale County FIA.

Federal officials from Washington, D.C. including representatives of the U.S. Health and Human Services Department and Food and Nutrition Service, shared current information on welfare reform and engaged in direct dialogue with attendees.

"It was good to talk to FNS staff and hear that they hope to simplify Food Stamp policy," McLain said.

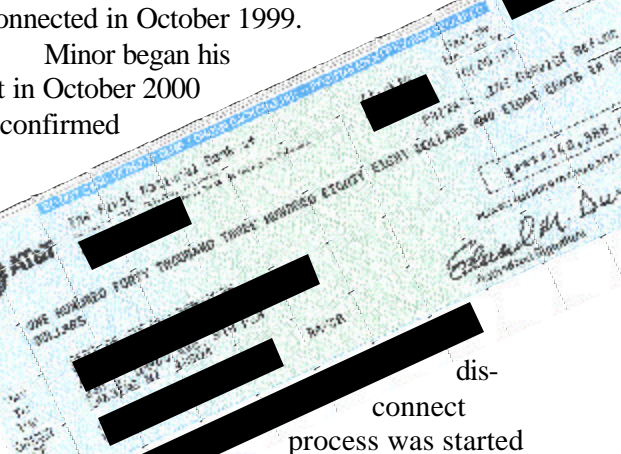


Claims against unused phone system detected, reported, refunded

Willie Minor, an employee in FIA Information Technology Management Services (prior to transfer to Department of Information Technology), audited accounts that revealed the FIA was being billed for network-related data circuits that were not being used. Furthermore, the FIA requested the circuits be disconnected in October 1999.

circuits that were not being used. Furthermore, the FIA requested the circuits be disconnected in October 1999.

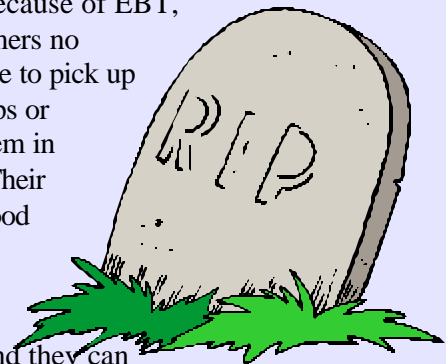
Minor began his audit in October 2000 that confirmed the



dis-
connect
process was started
but not completed. In late
November 2000 the FIA submitted

“As CIO I say great job,” said Mike Scieszka, FIA chief information officer. “As a taxpayer I cheer your efforts.”

Any customers having trouble using their “Bridge Card” can call the “Customer Service” number on the back of the card for assistance.



Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999

Federal law to improve transition from foster care to adulthood

By Sarah Swan

Telephone (517) 335-6060

■ The author is a shared-time department analyst working in the FIA Child and Family Services Administration.

In December 1999, the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Act of 1999—also known as the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999—became law.

It was passed after the U.S. Congress received extensive information that adolescents leaving foster care have significant difficulty making a successful transition to adulthood. The information showed that children aging out of foster care had high rates of homelessness, non-marital childbearing, poverty and delinquent or criminal behavior. They are also frequently the targets of crime and physical assaults.

The act, an amendment of Part E of Title IV of the Social Security Act, provides states with funding and flexibility in carrying out programs designed to help children make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. Allocations to states are made annually through a granting process and are based on the number of eligible youth in the state.

Michigan should receive \$6 million or more for the current year. The funds are administered through the FIA's Youth in Transition program with services delivered locally.

Legal service requirements

The law identifies adolescents that should receive independent living services as those youth that are expected to be in foster care until age 18. These youth need help transitioning to self-sufficiency. The act mandates that independent living services for these youth begin several years before high school graduation and continue, as needed, until the young adults establish independence or reach 21 years of age.

Services must include assistance in obtaining a high school diploma and post-secondary educational goals, career exploration, vocational training, job placement and retention, training in daily living skills, training in budgeting and financial management skills, substance abuse prevention, and preventive health activities including pregnancy prevention, smoking avoidance and nutrition education.

The act also mandates that personal and emotional support is provided for children aging out of foster care through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults. The range of independent living services and support must also be provided to youth that have exited foster care who are between ages 18-21 to help them achieve and maintain self-sufficiency.

In Michigan

In Michigan, foster care workers must provide all required services to every youth that is in foster care after he or she reaches age 14. Additionally, independent living services must be provided to those eligible youth that have exited the foster care system but have not yet reached age 21. Independent living services can be provided to youth, ages 12-13, based on an assessment of need and available resources.

Youth must be involved in the development of their independent living service plan and take responsibility for its outcome. Workers must review, with the youth, his or her independent living strengths and needs on a quarterly basis to assure continuing provision of services based on a current assessment. This will ensure that services are provided progressively as the youth's strengths and needs assessment indicates.

Employees should see the Children and Youth Services manual for detail regarding mandated independent living service provision requirements.

Other important aspects of the act include increasing the asset limit for Medicaid eligibility from \$1,000 to \$10,000. The act also allows states to continue Medicaid eligibility for youth that have left foster care to age 21. A mandate to train foster parents and foster care workers in the area of preparing youth for living independently has been included.

Increased state accountability

States are allowed to use up to one-third of their total allocation for room and board for an eligible youth, age 18-21 only, that are leaving foster care. The act further calls for states to consult with each Indian tribe and make efforts to coordinate the programs with the Tribes. Assurances must be made that benefits and services under the programs will be made available to Indian children on the same basis as to other children in the state.

The federal government has increased state accountability for outcomes for young people transitioning from foster care. Effectiveness of independent living services will be evaluated based on the population of 18-21 year olds who have left foster care. Program effectiveness will be determined by looking at whether those youth are able to function independently with sustaining employment, stable housing, avoidance of premarital child bearing, and avoidance of involvement in illegal acts.

Foster care policy amended

The federal government first made funds available for independent living services through Public Law 99-272, through the addition of section 477 to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. In response to the passage of this Act, Michigan's foster care policy was revised in May 2000. The new policy reflected the federal government's mandate that independent living services be provided to youth in foster care several years before high school completion to age 21 and defines required services.

Since 1987 the FIA has used those funds as the Youth in Transition fund source and distributed money to counties through an annual allocation process. After all other resources for independent living services have been exhausted, independent living service expenses can be provided by the YIT fund source through the county allocation. For more information regarding the YIT fund source, see the Children and Youth Services manual.

The added emphasis on preparing youth to live independently is causing a renewed energy among states. Many innovative programs are being developed nationwide that can serve as models.

There is still much work to be done in this new area of services to youth. However, the long-term benefits of program effectiveness will be determined when our youth are able to function independently with sustaining employment, stable housing, avoidance of pre-marital child bearing, and avoidance of involvement in illegal acts.

The act also mandates that services are to be provided through existing federally and locally funded programs such as educational services through the Michigan Department of Education and job training programs such as Michigan Works! and the Job Corps. The Department of Community Health has locally based programs for substance abuse education, and preventive health education, among others.



Supporting juvenile justice programs

FIA administered program supports technology, local governments across state

By Sean Brady

FIA Bureau of Juvenile Justice, Lansing

Telephone (517) 335-6189

LANSING – The Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) is a federal effort to assist the development of effective juvenile justice practices in states.



In Michigan, it provides significant assistance to the state's juvenile justice system and promotes greater accountability. The program defines juvenile justice accountability as assuring that offenders face consequences that make them aware of, and answerable for, the loss, damage or injury perpetrated on the victim. This must be achieved through a system of graduated sanctions imposed surely and swiftly. The

program is designed to support a variety of different types of juvenile justice programs including:

- Development and administration of accountability-based sanctions programs for juvenile offenders.
- Funding for more effective probation programs in juvenile courts and probation offices.
- Hiring additional juvenile judges, probation officers, and court-appointed defenders.
- Controlled substance testing (including interventions) for juvenile offenders.

Local governments have benefited from the JAIBG program. The grants provide funds to support local juvenile justice programs and allow each community to decide how the money is spent. This flexibility has allowed local governments to focus on their individual needs.

Local programs offer diversified services

Allegan County is using its grant to hire a half-time prosecutor focused on juvenile justice issues while the city of Troy is using funds to run a retail fraud accountability program. Several communities have chosen to form coalitions that combine their grant funds and allow larger joint projects. Washtenaw County joined with the cities of Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor to fund a full-time intake caseworker as well as a community service/restitution worker. In northern Michigan, funds from many small communities were combined into 18 substantial grants to Circuit Courts. These now cover all of the northern Lower Peninsula and much of the Upper Peninsula.

Other important programs are being developed to support the juvenile system across the entire state. Funding supports the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) program that is a central focus in Michigan's juvenile justice program. Block grant funds supported Michigan's annual BARJ conference and website. The programs have also provided a number of grants to supply books, videos, and other education materials to counties adopting BARJ principles.

Funds support juvenile justice technologies in FIA

The grant program is also supporting the juvenile digital fingerprinting system, technology that has been provided to four Michigan juvenile facilities; two more sites may be added soon. The system allows facilities to digitally record fingerprints and photographs of youth and to securely transmit this information into the databases of the Michigan State Police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This allows rapid and accurate identification of youth including those who have contact with the juvenile justice system in several different counties and states.

JAIBG provides extensive funding for the Juvenile Justice Online Technology (JJOLT) computer system that ties together facilities and staff across Michigan allowing rapid transfer of information. JJOLT improves access to data on delinquents while reducing paperwork burden and maintaining privacy safeguards. JAIBG funds supported purchase of computer hardware, software development and training.

These programs are overseen by the Governor's Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Ad Hoc Committee while the FIA Bureau of Juvenile Justice provides grant management services. For more information contact Diana Peck at (517) 335-3539 or see the federal website at <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jaibg>

FIA staff receives Peer Review award

Gogebic-Ontonagon receives award for best performance in calendar 2000

Ironwood Daily Globe

Sept. 18, 2001

BESSEMER – The Gogebic-Ontonagon Family Independence Agency Children's Protective Services staff received the "Peer Review" Award in late August.

The review process involved a week-long assessment of reviewing files and interviewing foster children, service providers, court personnel, attorneys and customers. Gogebic-Ontonagon County protective services workers' compliance on open cases was one of the best in Michigan.

Dale MacDonald, director of the Gogebic-Ontonagon FIA, welcomed staff from both offices as well as staff from the Zone 1 Office and Lac Vieux Desert Social Services.

"This event is really one of celebrating the success of not only FIA, but also of our community partners and the community as a whole," he said.

Steve Yager, Family Advocate for the FIA and former Peer Review chairperson, presented the plaque that honored Children's Protective Services staff, "In recognition of (their efforts in) exceeding the state average in the highest percentage of policy compliance areas for all counties reviewed through December 31, 2000."

Yager, from Lansing, said: "Children's Protective Services is at best a difficult program. Workers face uncertain, often dangerous work environments and are scrutinized at every turn. Accountability is necessary.

"I am pleased to celebrate your success today. Your counties' review demonstrated the excellence that is part of your everyday existence. The managers and front line workers are committed, professional and highly skillful in executing their duties.

"Thank you for your hard work and dedication to excellence in your efforts to protect the children of Gogebic and Ontonagon counties."

Daniel Borth, the local program manager of the review, reminded everyone, "Children's Protective Services does not work in a vacuum but has many levels of oversight. As a result this is a team accomplishment."

He introduced the Gogebic County protective services staff: Gary Olkonen, Elizabeth Fyle, Dennis Spaete, Julia Bortz, Robert Belknap and unit clerk Karen Ryskewecz and Chanda Corullo, a former worker acknowledged for her efforts.

Janet Holmstrom, program manager in Ontonagon, introduced her staff—Bobbi Jo Niemi, Carol Lombard and unit clerk Vicki Dobson. Another staff member, Steve Pelli, was unable to attend the presentation as he was in training.

In closing, MacDonald said, "The successes we are celebrating today and based in large part on a collective attitude that we will succeed each and every day in carrying out our shared vision and mission of making a positive difference in the lives of the families that each of our agencies serves."

Michigan earns \$25 million bonus

HHS award for reduction in out-of-wedlock births

Awards are third for Michigan, Alabama, Washington, D.C.

Contact John Allen, ACF Press Office

Telephone (202) 401-9215

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Michigan was one of two states and the District of Columbia to receive \$25 million for efforts to reduce out-of-wedlock births, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson announced the bonus awards Sept. 21. Alabama, the District of Columbia and Michigan achieved the nation's largest decreases in out-of-wedlock births between 1996 and 1999. This was the third award of bonuses for reductions in out-of-wedlock births, as provided for in the welfare reform law of 1996.

■ This and other HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available online at <http://www.hhs.gov/news>

State government news

On Nov. 19, Gov. Engler today appointed **Jacque Passino** as director of the newly-created Michigan **Department of Information Technology**, effective Nov. 26. "Jacque Passino will lead this department as it establishes a long-term strategy that allows for better management of technology investments, improved information management and more efficient services to Michigan citizens and businesses," said Engler. Passino was with Accenture, formerly known as Andersen Consulting, since 1972. Passino spent the first half of his career in Detroit, where he worked with General Motors, Ford, American Natural Resources and Domino's Pizza, among others.

Gov. Engler announced **Executive Orders** Nov. 6 outlining a plan to reduce spending from the state General Fund in the current fiscal year. See Executive Order 2001-9 at www.michigan.gov/gov

On Oct. 10, Gov. Engler's office issued the "**Michigan's Comprehensive Response**" containing questions and answers relating to the September 11 attacks and subsequent events. This 13-page document discusses action taken in state government to ensure security and personal safety—and what you can do to achieve these goals—since Sept. 11. It includes sections on biological terrorism and preventing chemical emergencies. See www.michigan.gov

The Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board "**Report to Michigan 2001**" (FIA Pub 802) is now available. The document outlines the board's legislative mandate and mission as well as efforts, collaboration and ongoing initiatives to eliminate domestic and sexual violence in Michigan. It can be found on the FIA-Net under "What's New" or by typing: CFSAdmin/dv/reporting.html after the FIA-Net address in the browser. Nonemployees can call the Domestic Violence Board at (517) 373-8144.

Family Independence Agency
Office of Communications
P O Box 30037
Lansing MI 48909

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